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ABSTRACT

An historical overview traces the Black Legend about persons of Spanish descent and seeks to demonstrate the influence of the Black Legend on Anglo attitudes towards Mexican Americans. The beginnings of the Black Legend are found in the sixteenth century when European countries in conflict with Spain used Spanish actions during the Sack of Rome, the Inquisition, the Revolt of the Netherlands, and the colonization of the New World to portray Spaniards as cruel, violent, greedy, religiously impure, and culturally and racially inferior. These characteristics were attributed to Mexican Americans by Anglo Americans throughout the 19th and 20th centuries and contributed to the delay of statehood for southwestern states, the Zoot Suit Riots, and discrimination and deportations during and after World War II. The overview presents one contemporary occurrence of the Black Legend in mass media and suggests that the prejudices and distortions characterizing Hispanics today come from cultural, religious, and imperialistic rivalry between Anglo or Nordic peoples and Spanish or Mexican American peoples. (LFL)

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THE CHICANO AND THE BLACK LEGEND

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Anthropologically and culturally, Mexican American (Chicano) history begins with the story of early man on this continent. When the Europeans first came to this hemisphere, there were perhaps as many as 25 million native Americans here. The best known, and perhaps the oldest of the early cultures, was that of the Mayas. These people had already reached a high level of civilization, more than a thousand years before the arrival of the Spaniards. The Mayas had developed a very accurate calendar[1] and had learned to use the mathematical quantity of zero and a system of numeration by position, centuries before these concepts had come into use in the eastern hemisphere.

Officially, Chicano history begins in December, 1845, when the United States annexed the Republic of Texas, transforming 5,000 Mexicans in Texas into second class citizens as Mexican Americans. Three years later, as the direct result of war and through the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, the United States acquired the entire northwest, which makes up what is today New Mexico, Arizona, California, Utah, Nevada, and parts of Colorado. Mexico lost more than one million square miles and was paid $15M in compensation. Mexicans living in the conquered territory were given the choice of returning to Mexico or becoming citizens of the United States. They were given one year to make this choice. Those still living in the conquered area at the

end of the prescribed time but who had not specifically declared their intentions one way or another, were declared United States citizens.

From 1848 on, these new United States citizens were to struggle to achieve an equal place in society, a struggle that still continues today. From the very beginning they were exposed to unfamiliar legal, political, and social institutions conducted in what was for them, a foreign language in what was once their native country. Don Juan Bandini, once a wealthy California landowner, expressed the early sense of alienation in 1855 when he quoted from the Scriptures to illustrate his life:

> Our inheritance is turn to strangers—
> our houses to aliens.
> We have drunken our water for money—
> our wood is sold unto us.
> Our necks are under persecution—
> we labor and have no rest.[2]

There are many factors which come into play in analyzing the existing attitudes and realities of today's feelings towards the Chicano. Many people resent the fact that the Mexican American has failed to assimilate, or become an active participant in the melting pot theory of American society. They feel resentful that anyone would hold so adamantly to a "foreign" language and culture within their society.

Every legend usually has a hero. Who, then, is the hero of the Black Legend? The Spaniards? The Mexicans? The Chicanos? The answer in part, is that the attitudes of many Americans today reflect a four century old national character development concerning hispanic peoples and their culture. For the most part, the national character of the Spaniard has been a disparaging one, revived and enriched each generation for a particular purpose or purposes. Today's imaginative twist is that of Chicano discrimination. Historically, the national

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character of the Spaniard was developed mostly by Nordic peoples based on the writings of Fray Bartolome de las Casas.[3] His writings were graphically illustrated by the De Bry's of Frankfurt in his 1598 edition of the Brief Relation. The De Bry's engravings were extremely gruesome, depicting scenes or rape, murder, burning of Indians alive, torture... The disparaging portrayal of the Spanish character was concurrent with the developing so-called "Nordic Superiority Complex", which was represented in its extreme in the 20th century by Hitler's Germany.

CONFLICT AND CRUELTY

Probably no other Spanish character trait has been historically as promoted and revived as the hispanic inherent propensity for violence and cruelty. The belief that hispanic people, and in this instance it was the Chicano, delight in the show of blood manifested itself in 1942 in an official report on Mexican American deliquency. Captain E. Duran Ayres, chief of the "Foreign Relations Bureau" of the Los Angeles sheriff's office stated: "The Caucasian... especially the Anglo Saxon, when engaged in fighting, particularly among youths, resort to fisticuffs and may at times kick each other, which is considered unsportive: but this Mexican element considers all that to be a sign of weakness, and all he knows and feels is a desire to use a knife or some lethal weapon. In other words, his desire is to kill, or at least let blood."[4] There is no doubt that this trait has come down through the ages, but whether it has, in fact been passed through the ages genetically (Captain Ayres so testified: "When there is added to this inborn characteristic that has come down through the ages, the use of liquor, then we certainly have crimes of violence."[5]) or as

a legend by way of the Nordic world remains to be seen. The latter possibility becomes of increasing interest as we observe that this character train has often been greatly exaggerated, and always reaches its heights during times of political conflict between Spain and other countries. We might cite, for instance, Elizabethan England, which was involved in competing with Spain religiously and imperialistically. During Cromwell's time, the "Western Design" or English expansionalism at the expense of Spanish colonization was the national policy; the English found themselves in need of writings to explain the reason that an attack on Spanish colonies was a moral duty. With writers such as Tomas Gage and Richard Hakluyt, who stressed Spanish barbaric behavior, a rationalization for the attack on Jamica was not hard to find.

After the defeat of the Spanish Armada, celebration of Spanish cruelty reached a curious and creative height. The English, having been deprived of a first-hand experience with the renowned Spanish cruelty, took to writing verse about what would have been the fate of the Englishmen had the Spanish won the battle for the seas. Here are some imaginative speculations written by Thomas Deloney:

> To kill and murder man and wife
> as malice doth arise;
> And to deflower
> our virgins in our sight;
> And in the cradle cruelly
> the tender babe to smite[6]

This poem brings to mind the use of the dreaded instruments and tortures of the Inquisition. Edgar Allen Poe was to use the Inquisition as the inspiring theme for "The Pit and the Pendulum". It might be

interesting to note that in Latin America, less heretics were killed by the use of the Inquisition than Roman Catholics were killed in Elizabethan England.[7] During this time, loyalty to the faith in Spain was strongly associated with loyalty to the country, and not to be an avowed Catholic was paramount to being a traitor.

During the revolt of the Netherlands (1568-1648), much anti-Spanish publications circulated with the typical emphasis on cruelty. Under the leadership of William the Silent, Prince of Orange, numerous cities, especially in the provinces of Holland and Zeeland, joined in a rebellion against Spanish rule. The Duke of Alba was hard pressed to reconquer the lost territory, and therefore, created his "Council of Troubles" which came to be known as the "Council of Blood", since the Duke of Alba was said to have been responsible for the elimination of 18 to 20 thousand people. By the middle of the 17th century, it was reported of this incident:

> They (the Spaniards) have killed women great with child, and ripped up their bellies and taken out the child and killed it, and some they have flayed alive, and covered drum heads with their skins, and some they have tied to post, and made a small fire round about them, and so roasted them to death.[8]

As mentioned earlier, it was going to be a Spaniard himself, Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas, also known as the "Apostle of the Indies", who was going to be indirectly responsible for much of what was written about Spain. Bartolomé de Las Casas was opposed to the Spanish Indian colonization policies, and he wrote prolifically describing as many events of Spanish cruelty as he deemed necessary to make his point. His <u>BrevissimaRelación de la Destrucción de las Indias</u>, probably, more than any other work, has been cited many times during times of conflict between Spain and other countries. There is no doubt that

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Las Casas had a particular axe to grind, and many people feel that he therefore, used much hyperbole in order to emphasize his own objectives. The first publication of Brevissima Relación de la Destrucción de las Indias was the Seville edition of 1552, followed by a French version in 1578, a Dutch version in 1579, and two more in French in 1582, and an English translation in 1583. During this period in Spain, criticism was accepted and allowed to be printed. One of the historical consequences of this policy was the extensive foreign editions published and used for propagandistic purposes. In 1598, the De Brys of Frankfurt published an edition of Las Casas' work, with engravings illustrating the different kinds of tortures used by the Spaniards.

In 1656, during Cromwell's "Western Design" campaign, numerous publications of Las Casas came out. The title of the following one pretty much sums up the prejudicial feelings of English writers at that time:

> "The Tears of the Indians: Being an Historical and true Account of the Cruel Massacres and Slaughters of above Twenty Millions of innocent People; Commited by the Spaniards in the Islands of Hispaniola, Cuba, Jamaica, &c. As also in the Continent of Mexico, Peru & other Places of the West Indies, To the total destruction of those Countries. Written in Spanish by Casaus, an Eye-witness of those things, And made English by J.P. London, 1656.[9]

Francis Drake and John Hawkins (1545-1596 and 1562-1622 respectively).

Francis Drake and John Hawkins were interested in breaking the Spanish trade monopoly and they played a part in the promotion of the Black Legend. They were actually common pirates breaking established law, but were portrayed as heroes fighting for the liberation of the oppressed "New World." Francis Drake was knighted for his efforts. One example of the effect these men had on the English public can be found in the writings of John Milton. Urged by the necessity of

justifying an unprovoked attack on the Spanish colonies during the time of Cromwell, wrote two plays; "The Cruelty of the Spaniards in Peru" and "The History of Sir Francis Drake". The latter work dealt with Drake's exploits in Panama:

> And noble Chief, the cruelties which they
> Have often felt beneath the Spaniards sway,
> (Who midst the triumphs of our Nuptial feasts
> Have forc'd our Brides and slaughter'd all our guests)
> Revenge does all the fetters break of Law.[10]

One final example of the influence of Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas work can be found in the writings of Richard Hakluyt (1553-1616). Richard Hakluyt is considered one of the greatest historians of the 16th century. He seemed to be interested in English expansionalism, since he was an active member of the Southern Virginia Company organized to colonize Virginia. Hakluyt's "Discourse concerning Western Planting" was presented to the Queen in 1583, however, it was not published untill 1877. Hakluyt states in his work that Spaniards have done great things in the Indies for "filthy lucre and vain ostentatetion"[11] and complains of the disruptive influence of Spanish policy in Europe and goes so far as to quote five pages from Las Casas in order to prove their cruel nature.

> I may there fore conclude this matter with comparing the Spaniards unto a drone, or an empty vessel, which when smitten upon yieldeth a great sound and that afar off; but come near and look into them, there is nothing in them: or rather like the ass which wrapped himself in a lion's skin and marched far off to strike terror into the hearts of the other beasts, but when the fox drew near he perceived his long years and made him a jest unto all the beasts of the forest. In a like manner, we, (upon peril of my life) shall make the Spaniard ridiculous in all Europe, if with piercing eyes we see into his contemptible weakness in the West Indies and with true style paint him out <u>ad vivum</u> unto the world in his faint colors.[12]

This last quote is especially damaging because it attacks intellectual and emotional character of Spain and Spaniards.

The notion that Spaniards and their descendents are racially and culturally inferior, probably dates back to the sack of Rome in 1512. The Italians were very resentful of the Spaniards' dominance over them, and tended to criticize anything Spanish as "inferior". They characterized Spanish literary genres such as the novel of Chivalry as being barbaric and in their own drama would depict the Spaniard to be rapacious and cruel. The Italians would often apply the term "marrano" to any Spaniard they would see on the street (here in the United States, after 1848 we were going to be called "greasers"), making reference to their mixture of Moorish and Jewish blood and the resulting impurity of their Christianity. Philip Wayne Powell sums this very well as follows:

> The racial and religious impurity of Spain and Spaniards not only led to Italians depicting Spaniards in their literature as abnormally barbarous and with "oriental" traits such as general immorality and sexual perversion and also encouraged, for political reason, the view that the Spaniards were heretics by nature, and thus not to be trusted.[13]

This attitude of religious impurity is rather ironical, since this was the time that Spain was "purifying" Christianity through the Inquisition, expulsion of the Jews in 1492 and the Moriscos later.

The German people have historically looked at the Spaniards as a darker, smaller, inferior race. German visitors to Spain during the 15th and 16th centuries, were disgusted with the Spaniard's immorality, small size and dark coloring, avarice and trickery.[14] The Germans often linked Spaniards with Italians, Turks and Jews and reported that they "eat white bread and kiss white women with great pleasure."[15] Herein, lies, we believe the Anglo-Saxon superiority complex.

In 1492, Spain and its people came to what for them was going to be a "New World". Spain did bring to the Americas its religion and with it the Inquisition. It also brought its language, legal system (including community property law, laws of water and minerals); they brought the first cattle, horses, goats, pigs, cats, peaches, figs, oranges, apples, grapes, apricots, limes, pears, olives and lemons.[16] Yet, this same Spaniards, the Black Legend tells us, have shown themselves, historically, to be uniquely cruel, bigote, tyrannical, lazy, fanatical, greedy and treacherous, but Englishmen, who also came to this part of the world are more respectifully called COLONISTS, or HOMEBUILDERS or SEEKERS OF LIBERTY.[17]

Obviously, the attitudes of the Black Legend were not left in Europe. Hispanophobia continued here in Nueva España, New Spain and other Spanish colonies in the Americas.

If in Europe, the Spaniards were criticised for their "supposed" mixture with Moorish and Jewish blood, here in the Americas, (and for the Chicanos, in Mexico) they were going to be criticised for their blood mixture with Indians. They were going to be called MESTIZOS. In fact, Spain itself was going to be a party to the development of very specific Castes system. These Castes indicated the different levels of social status that existed in Colonial Mexico, all of them based on mixtures of Spanish, Indian, and Negro blood.

1840 - - - - - - - - - - - - THE CHICANO AND MANIFEST DESTINY

The Black Legend now takes on a new guise, the United States was going to invade and capture Mexican land because she believed that was her "Manifest Destiny." In 1840, a man by name of T. J. Farhman, wrote

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a book titled, Life, Adventures and Travels in California. This is what he had to had to say about the Mexicanos:

> Thus much for the Spanish population of the Californias, in every way a poor apology of European extraction; as general thing, incapable of reading or writing, and knowing nothing of science or literature, nothing of government but its brutal force, nothing of virtue but the sanction of the church, nothing of religion but ceremonies of the national ritual... In a word, the Californians are an imbecile, pusillanimous race of men, and unfit to control the destinies of that beautiful country.

If you think this sounds familiar, it's because it is. We heard this earlier in comments made about Spain. In 1847, The New York Herald printed the following: "... we believe it is part of our destiny to civilize that beautiful country (Mexico) and enable its inhabitants to appreciate some of the many advantages and blessings they enjoy." Similiar stories were published in other newspapers of the time. But one stands out above the others, it appeared in The United States Magazine and Democratic Review, 1847: "The Mexican race now see, in the fate of the aborigines (Indians) of the north, their own inevitable destiny. They must amalgamate and be lost in the superior vigor of the Anglo-Saxon race, or they must utterly perish." Things did not get any better for the Mexicanos after 1848 when they became Mexican-Americans.

IN QUEST OF GOLD . . . . . IN CALIFORNIA

In 1849, Anglo miners began to come from the east in tens of thousands. The Anglo newcomers resolved that the "foreigners" must leave. They formed into armed bands to drive Sonorans form their claims.

The Foreign Miner's Tax of 1851 completed the attack on the Sonorans. The law levied a tax of $20.00 per month on all foreign miners,

but it was collected only from those who spoke Spanish. And who were these Spanish speaking miners? They were Mexicans, that after 1848, according to the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, were U.S. citizens, who were to "maintained and protected in the free enjoyment of their liberty and property, and... religion without restriction." (Article IX, Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo)[18]

THE MEXICANOS .....CHICANOS..... IN TEXAS

In September, 1857, the residents of Uvalde county, Texas passed several resolutions, prohibiting all Mexicans (who were in reality U.S. citizens) from traveling through the country except under a passport granted by some American authority.[19]

New Mexico, first submitted a formal request for statehood in 1850. It was denied and territorial status was granted instead. In 1890, New Mexico was still a territory. Why? The majority of the people there were Spanish speaking Chicanos, or as the people there preferred to call themselves, Hispanos. In an 1866 Republican Congressional report, Hispanos in New Mexico were pictured as largely illiterate, superstitious and morally decadent. Again this sound like an echo from the past, from the Black Legend. In 1889 the Chicago Tribune referred to New Mexicans as "...not American, but 'greaser' people ignorant of our laws, manners, customs and institutions."

THE CHICANO AS A WORKER--NEEDED-WANTED--NOT NEEDED-NOT WANTED

After the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, the Chicano worker was discovered because he was needed. Yes, Chicanos were now needed to work on the railroads and needed to work in agriculture. But this too was to pass. In 1933, this country was going to the - "Great Depression", and once more, a black shadow hovers over the

Chicano community. It was going to be called the Repatriation Campain, and 400,000 Mexicans and Chicanos were sent back to their country, they were deported

1940s--World War II, and we are once again needed and, therefore, welcomed. The Bracero Program (Contract Workers from Mexico) was going to be initiated with a Mi Casa es tu Casa policy. Yet, at the very same time that Chicanos were serving in a disproportionatley higher number in the armed services and had a higher number of combat soldiers than any other ethnic group; had a higher number of casualties; had the highest number of medal of Honor recepients, at home the shadows of the Black Legend loomed heavy over their younger Chicano brothers.[20] In Los Angeles from June 3 to June 11, 1943, U.S. sailors, soldiers and marines roamed the streets attacking Mexican American youths. These so-called "Zoot Suit Riots" climaxed a year-long newspaper campaign against Chicanos in Los Angeles. In early June, 1943, the press reported that "zoot-suiters" had beaten up some sailors. On June 3, 200 sailors in a fleet of 20 taxi cabs cruised through the barrio. They beat up four youths in separate incidents and left them on the sidewalk. For several days thereafter, the attacks were repeated. On juen 7, "a mob of several thousand soldiers, sailors, and civilians, proceeded to beat up every zoot-suiter they could find. Pushing its way into the important motion picture theaters, the mob ordered the management to turn on the house lights and then ranged up and down the aisles dragging Mexicans out of their seats... If the victims wore zoot-suits, they were stripped of their clothing and left naked or half-naked on the streets, bleeding and bruised."[21]

While Chicano soldiers, as we stated earlier, filled more than their share of combat positions overseas during World War II, Anglo

discrimination continued at home. In Lockhart, Texas, for example, Chicano residents were asked to leave the town's public Fourth of July celebration. They were told over a loudspeaker that it was an American celebration, and, therefore, for white people only.

Returning Chicano veterans were going to fare no better, they too were going to return to discrimination. Macario Garcia, for example, who was born in Mexico, served in the U.S. Army and was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor, nevertheless, was refused a cup of coffee at the Oasis Cafe in Richmond, Texas, because he is Mexican. Many Chicano veterans, although entitled to all G.I. benefits, were kept from using their housing loans. New Housing developments were often restricted from purchase or rental by Chicanos. In Texas, all Chicanos were viewed as Mexicans at that time.

1954, the war is now over and so is the need for Chicanos and Mexicanos. This time the name used for deportation was going to be more keeping with the tradition of the Black Legend, it was called "Operation Wetback." From California to Texas and from Kansas city do Detroit, more than 200,000 Mexicanos were going to be deported.

THE CHICANO, THE POLITICAL ARENA AND THE BLACK LEGEND

In California politics, ethnic racism was alive and well in 1958. Henry Lopez, a Harvard trained lawyer and candidate for California Secretary of State was the only Democrat to lose in November. All non Mexican Americans were swept into office. To this very day, Los Angeles, with its huge Chicano population still does not have a single member in the city council.

THE CHICANO AND THE MASS MEDIA - 1974

In 1974, Channel 28 (public service television) in Los Angeles

presented a program titled "Saga of Western Man," It was supposed to be a program that was to give an objective picture of what happened in North America upon the arrival of the Spaniards and English. However, the announcement that was published for this program in the Los Angeles "Television Times" was full of distortions for the Chicano. It read as follow:

> TV Guide November 2, 1974 "28 SAGA OF WESTERN MAN"
>
> "A trip across Mexico with Cortez, one of history's luckiest invaders. This film re-creates the incredible victory of an inexperienced explorer in leading a frightened army of 600. The superstitious Aztec ruler views Cortez as a God... and Cortez stumbles his way to greatness. (Emphasis added)

The above was followed with the announcement of the program about the pilgrims.

> Los Angeles TV Guide November 3 and 9. Saga of Western Man
>
> "The Pilgrim Adventure." Recreation of experiences of 17th century separatists whose courage and determination against tremendous odds wrote a chapter in world history.

We have seen that the Black Legend is still present in many of the areas previously mentioned. And now we find it present in the most widely viewed and acknowledged system of communication and instruction--the visual media. Society has long relied on the authenticity of its materials as "gospel truth." But in the above two announcements we can readily see how one, the Hispanic perspective is totally distorted. Cortez was lucky and not a colonizer but an invader. He achieved an incredible victory even though he was inexperienced and his men were afraid, Cortez did not achieve greatness, he stumbles his way there The Pilgrims on the other hand, were couragous and determined even though the odds were great.[22]

CONCLUSION

The intent of this presentation has not been to establish that the Black Legend is the only answer to the Anglo attitudes we find in today's American society toward the Chicano or Mexican American. However, it is important to realize that the Anglo-American is a descendent of those countries which were most in conflict with Spain and her empire, and later with Mexico in the Mexican American war in which Mexico lost half of its territory to the U.S.

The idea of Cromwell's "Western Design" may very well have carried over to the American "Manifest Destiny" and shaped the Anglo-American's attitude in the Mexican American war. Strong anti-Mexican and Chicano feelings do exist and have existed historically in American society. Here, we are only suggesting that part of the strength of these prejudices and distortions that charaterize Spaniards "to be uniquely cruel, bigoted, tyrannical, obscurantist, lazy, fanatical, greedy, and treacherous"[23] come from deep-seated cultural, religious and imperialistic rivalry which manifests itself in North America today as Anglo or Nordic verses Spanish or Mexican American.

The Anglo-American is the heir of the Northern European culture, and is still engaged in a cultural if not territorial battle with the peoples of the Southwest and other parts of the U.S. The old rivalry still exists, as the Chicano defends his rights to continue an Hispanic culture (including the Spanish language) in the midst of a predominately Northern European culture; and the Anglo-American persists in his feelings of superiority over the Spanish speaking people of the Americas and the Chicano and other Hispanic people in the United States.

NOTAS

[1]Their calendar was as accurate as our's today; they calculated the path of Venus with an error of only 14 seconds a year and among other achievements, also originated a complex system of writing.

[2]Robert Glass Cleland. The Cattle on a Thousands Hills- Southern California, 1850-1880 (San Marino, CA, 1951), appendix

[3]Fray Bartolome de Las Casas wrote Brevissima Relacion de la Destruccion de las Indias which was to be translated to several other languages.

[4]Carey McWilliams. North from Mexico (New York: Greenwood Press, Publishers, 1968), p. 234.

[5]Ibid.

[6]William S. Maltby. The Black Legend in England (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1971), p. 82.

[7]Philip Wayne Powell. Tree of Hate (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1971), p. 26.

[8]William S. Maltby. Op. Cit., p. 82.

[9]Philip Wayne Powell. Op. Cit., p. 101.

[10]William S. Maltby. Op. Cit., p. 128.

[11]Ibid.

[13]Philip Wayne Powell. Op. Cit., p. 46.

[14]Ibid., p. 47

[15]Ibid., p. 50

[16]Only partial list. See Carey McWilliams, Op. Cit., p. 32.

[17]See Philip Wayne Powell, Op. Cit., p. 11.

[18]In 1855, the California legislature passed an Antivagrancy Act called the "Greaser Act." Section 2 specified "all persons who are commonly known as 'Greasers' (this is what Chicanos were called then), or the issue of Spanish or Indian blood (mixed blood or Mestizos)... and who go around armed and are not peaceful and quiet persons...".

[19]See David J. Weber. Foreigners In Their Native Land (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1978), pp. 183-184.

[20]The Congressional Medal of Honor is the highest military award for bravery that can be given to an individual by the U.S. During World War II, 17 Mexican Americans won Medals of Honor.

[21]Carey McWilliams., Op. Cit., p. 248.

[22]Because of time constrains we will not deal with the Chicano in education and in school textbooks.

[23]Philip Wayne Powell. Op. Cit., p. 11.